



## Effects on health of volunteers deployed during a disaster

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### Abstract:

Little is known about the risks, hazards, and health outcomes for health care personnel and volunteers working in disaster relief. We sought to characterize risks and outcomes in volunteers deployed to provide relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina. We performed a longitudinal e-mail survey that assessed preventive measures taken before and during deployment, exposures to hazards while deployed, and health outcomes at 1, 3, and 6 months postdeployment. Overall response rate was 36.1 per cent and one-third of those who responded did so for all three surveys. Exposures to different types of hazards changed over time with exposures to contaminated water being common. Despite predeployment and on-site education, use of preventive measures such as vaccination, appropriate clothing, hydration, sunscreen, and insect repellent was variable. Few injuries were sustained. Insect bites were common despite the use of insect repellants. Skin lesions, diarrhea, and other gastrointestinal complaints occurred most commonly early on during or after deployment. Psychological complaints were common at 3 and 6 months. In conclusion, identification of at risk volunteer cohorts with longitudinal surveillance is critical for future disaster planning to provide training for volunteers and workers and to allow for deployment of appropriate resources pre, during, and postdeployment.

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### Resource Description

#### Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

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**Other Communication Audience:** Volunteers deployed during disaster

#### Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Food/Water Quality

#### Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Ocean/Coastal

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## **Geographic Location:**

resource focuses on specific location

United States

## **Health Impact:**

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Infectious Disease, Injury, Mental Health/Stress

**Infectious Disease:** Foodborne/Waterborne Disease

**Foodborne/Waterborne Disease:** General Foodborne/Waterborne Disease

**Mental Health Effect/Stress:** Stress Disorder

## **Intervention:**

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

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## **Medical Community Engagement:**

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

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## **Mitigation/Adaptation:**

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

**Population of Concern:** A focus of content

## **Population of Concern:**

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Workers

## **Resource Type:**

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

## **Timescale:**

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

## **Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:**

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

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